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Agenda item 10

QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS IN ANY PART OF THE WORLD, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO COLONIAL AND OTHER DEPENDENT COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES

Joint written statement submitted by International Association for Religious Freedom, Women's International Democratic Federation, World Federation of Democratic Youth, non-governmental organizations in general consultative status; General Arab Women Federation, Himalayan Research and Cultural Foundation, Indian Movement "Tupaj Amaru", Indigenous World Association, International Association of Democratic Lawyers, International Institute for Non-Aligned Studies, International League for the Rights and Liberation of Peoples, North-South XXI, Pax Christi International, Socialist International Women, Union of Arab Jurists, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, World Movement of Mothers, non-governmental organizations in special consultative status; International Education Development, Inc., Movement against Racism and for Friendship among Peoples, World Christian Life Community, World Peace Council, non-governmental organizations on the Roster

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement, which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV).

[15 April 1998]

1. In accordance with the principles set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Charter of the United Nations, the provisions of the Geneva Conventions relating to humanitarian rights and the provisions of the International Covenants on Human Rights, the undersigned non-governmental organizations wish to state their profound concern regarding the application of economic sanctions that violate human rights by depriving civilian populations of their means of subsistence.

2. We should like to draw the attention of the Commission to General Comment 8 issued on 19 December 1997 by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which stresses the need to evaluate the consequences of sanctions on human rights, including for the most vulnerable groups, such as children and older persons.

3. In addition, resolution 1997/35 of the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities emphasizes the adverse impact of economic sanctions on human rights and appeals to all States concerned to reconsider their adoption of and support for such measures.

4. The most striking example is that of Iraq. This embargo, which has been in force for seven years, has seen the deaths of more than one and a half million Iraqis, most of them women, children and older persons. Owing to the shortage of food and medicines, infant mortality is expected to continue at a rate of 220 per day.

5. Furthermore, some diseases contracted during the Gulf war, in particular owing to the use of uranium projectiles by the American forces, are appearing in the form of leukaemia and other cancers. The sanctions have weakened Iraq's capacity to provide adequate medical treatment for the persons affected and have prevented the reconstruction and consolidation of the health and education systems, as well as depriving Iraq of the possibility of exploiting its production facilities and its economic and human potential.

6. We urge the Commission on Human Rights to do everything in its power to ensure that:

(i) The sanctions against Iraq are lifted;

(ii) Appropriate measures are taken, in accordance with humanitarian law and the international human rights instruments, to prevent the imposition of sanctions that cause suffering to the civilian populations by violating human rights.